



March 12, 2013

Re: SB 1080

Honorable Chairs, Members of the Committee:

I am President of the UCONN AAUP Chapter and a professor in the School of Nursing for approximately thirty-five years. During this time, I have been involved in tenure and promotion matters at the level of the department, the School of Nursing, and the University level. I regret that I am unable to join you in person today but my teaching obligations do not permit my attendance.

On behalf of the ~2,000 UCONN faculty and AAUP I urge you to not recommend further consideration of SB 1080. While I do not know the reasons for the Bill being filed, it is important to appreciate the following:

1. Tenure is neither a given nor is it automatic, and, in fact, tenure is difficult to earn. It takes a minimum of five years of close review, every faculty member is held to very high standards, and these high standards apply in every situation. What differs in each case are the components within the tenure decision and these are dependent on the terms of one's appointment and the nature of the discipline, be it in the sciences, engineering, fine arts, liberal arts, in business, natural resources, medicine, and more. Components may be publications, patents, presentations, grants, teaching, service, sculptures, artistic performances, practice and many others. Using Boyer's definition of scholarship, tenure is based on scholarship of discovery, teaching, integration and/or application.
2. The academic progress of a faculty member toward tenure in one's field is subjected to intensive and extensive internal and external assessment of both the progress *and* the exactness of their science or engineering or art contributions, publications, discoveries in their field, and so many more benchmarks. A statutory singling out of a criterion, any criterion, would place a narrow and inappropriately heavy weighting on only one aspect of a faculty member's expectations. This is a very complex matter such that the courts have widely held that no single determination can substitute for the considered judgment of an academic institution. Surely it is not the purpose of any legislator to hold a patent as a higher

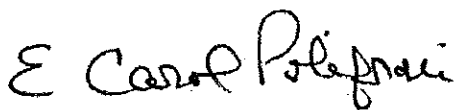
consideration in tenure than excellent teaching or further research in one's area. We can only imagine the courtroom drama of a case involving one person who held a single successful patent yet was denied tenure in favor of one who held two modestly successful patents when the institution sought to honor apparent legislative intent which led to inability to see through muddy waters to a full record.

3. Beyond those complexities of pragmatism, it is the scholars within a field, a subject area, and/or a specific discipline, that have the responsibility and authority to determine what is excellence and what constitutes the level of excellence to award tenure. In the words of the United States Supreme Court, "Teachers and students must always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding; otherwise our civilization will stagnate and die." (AAUP website). This freedom to inquire, to study and to evaluate must not be encumbered by legislative mandates preferring one type of inquiry over another.
4. No one would want to divert efforts from research, which may lead to scientific breakthroughs, to a chase for patents that might have little commercial value, yet this might be an unintended consequence. Every faculty member brings some extra dimension to his or her department discipline. Rigorous academic efforts in teaching, science, engineering, and more in the array of disciplines must be encouraged through the assessment of one's expected set of contributions.

The intention of SB 1080 is not clear to me. However, if it is for reporting purposes there are mechanisms by which this can be facilitated. The proposed funding for the Next Generation proposal essentially calls for building on existing 21st Century UCONN legislation. This in turn requires semi-annual reporting on construction. This apparent purpose of SB 1080 can be achieved by the administration taking the annually submitted reports of faculty in the areas research success (including patent development), and converting this information into a report.

I hope that this has helped communicate our considered perspective in opposition to this proposal and I, on behalf of AAUP, will be glad to respond in writing to any questions forwarded.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E Carol Polifroni". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

E. Carol Polifroni, EdD, CNE, NEA-BC, RN, ANEF

Professor and President

